RAFI-USA 2020 IMPACT REPORT

WORKING TOGETHER, MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

A YEAR OF CHANGE, HARDSHIP MET, OPPORTUNITIES TAKEN.... WORKING TOGETHER.... THANK YOU

As we continue living with COVID-19, I hope you are finding ways to stay positive, engaged, and connected. I am encouraged and humbled by the outpouring of generosity and support from our community — from you.

While much is difficult, I hold on to the fact that the pandemic has exposed our broken food system and presented us with new opportunities to advance our work. RAFI-USA is committed to building local food economies and creating the more equitable food system we envision.

I am incredibly grateful to the hard-working and dedicated staff at RAFI-USA, and to our board of directors, our many partners, and the farmers we work with every day. By working together, we will successfully face whatever challenges come our way on behalf of the communities we serve.

Thank you for helping us meet the challenges of this moment, for helping RAFI-USA make a difference.

Edna Rodriguez,
Executive Director

rafi USA
RURAL ADVANCEMENT FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

Herbert Brown, Sr. and Herb Brown, Jr.

GROWING THE FARMERS OF COLOR NETWORK (FOCN)

FOCN grew to 55 members. Several farmer brigades — farmers helping farmers — were held this fall, with a limited number of participants and COVID-19 protocols in place — more are upcoming. FOCN staff provided in-depth technical assistance to more than 50 farmers and held the webinar, "Farm Legacy and Estate Planning: Strategies for Risk, Resilience, and Culture."

RAFI-USA HELPS FARMERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES RECOVER FROM COVID-19 IMPACTS

As COVID-19 stay-at-home orders went into effect and farmers markets, restaurants, and schools closed, many small farmers were immediately impacted. We adjusted our budget and secured additional support to re-grant funds to struggling farmers and rural communities.

Norman UMC Volunteers

Awarded $131,500 in Farmers of Color Network Infrastructure grants to 27 farmers in North and South Carolina and Virginia. Recipients were 66% Black, 11% Indigenous, 11% Latinx, 7% Gullah-Geechee, 4% Asian.

"The two new caterpillar tunnels will allow us to grow off season and grow a larger variety of vegetables. And the community will have access to more fresh vegetables, which will increase economic and health well-being."

Awarded $69,000 in COVID-19 Emergency Household grants to 138 farmers in North Carolina and, through Farm Aid's Farmer Resilience Initiative, awarded $35,500 to an additional 71 farmers in Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"On June 23 my wife and I were diagnosed as positive for COVID-19 and after two weeks of being sick and quarantined I was able to return to work. You have no idea how much this is going to help fill in the gap of these missed weeks of income. Thank you so very much from the bottom of our hearts."

Awarded $69,000 in Food Relief Fund grants to 69 church and community-based hunger relief groups purchasing food from local farmers.

"We knew when COVID-19 first started that our community was going to be impacted worse than others because we already deal with food insecurity. Put a pandemic on top of that and it exposes the weakness in our systems. It was truly community supporting community."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Farmer Crisis Hotline received 123 calls. Our Farm Advocates are managing 35 intensive farmer cases with more than $7.7 million of assets at risk. Nine cases have been resolved — five are still farming and $2.2 million in assets were retained.

The Expanding Farmers Market Access Fresh Bucks and Double Bucks program put over $113,122 of fresh, locally grown produce onto the tables of 7,786 SNAP customers — a 376% increase over 2019. All monies went directly to 300 NC farmers.

Launched a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) research project, "Navigating Financial and Mental Health Crises," to improve mental health assistance programs in a culturally appropriate way for Native American, African American and white farmers. We also held the webinar, "The Trauma of Betrayal in Farm Loss."

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED DURING THE PANDEMIC BY GOING VIRTUAL

Come to the Table's "Community Conversations: Spirit, Power, and Connection" held six virtual events with more than 380 participants as well as other online programs. Webinars incuded "What Can Rural Communities and People of Faith Do to Prevent Suicide" and "How Did We Get Here, and What Can I Do? Democracy, Land, and Liberation."

RAFI-USA co-organized the virtual "NC State Candidates Forum: Farms, Food, and Hunger," featuring six candidates and with 400 people registered. One attendee said, "I turned eighteen in May, and this will be my first time voting in a general election. I loved this opportunity to become more informed on who/what exactly I am voting for."

Michael Carter Jr.

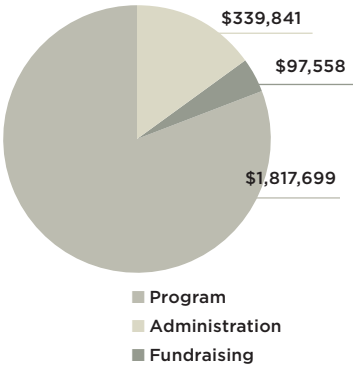
AND MORE...

Published the report, "When Diversity Isn't Enough: Experiences of Board Members of Color at Agricultural and Environmental Nonprofits."

The Southern Farmers Seed Coop planted four varieties of organic soybean seed on 100 acres and planted two double cross plots of corn — harvesting in progress.

We promoted various Action Alerts to federal and state decision-makers: 3,021 people took 11,106 actions.

Generated an impressive 1,783 comments to USDA for our #StandWithFarmFamilies campaign.

Collaborated on the NC Worker Week of Action garnering 600 engagements and 35,000 impressions across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as hundreds of action emails.

RAFI-USA 2020 Budget